



The Rituals of Renaissance: Liturgy and Mythic History in *The Marvels of Rome*

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Abstract

The *Mirabilia urbis romae* offers us insight into the symbolic meaning of the streetscape of Rome from the perspective of a canon of St. Peter's. It should be read alongside the contemporary Roman *Ordo* with which it was certainly associated in the twelfth century. When read in that context, the *Mirabilia* serves as a kind of direct and indirect commentary on the papal liturgy. The papal liturgies at Easter and Christmas moved through an environment that was "re-written" by the *Mirabilia* as a narrative of Christian Roman renewal and of triumph throughout the Mediterranean world. The *Mirabilia* celebrates both Roman renewal and hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean, giving heightened significance to the liturgical life of the twelfth-century papacy. The papal liturgy, at these most triumphant processional moments, celebrated that historic and, ultimately, eschatological triumph.

Keywords

Rome, Benedict of St. Peter's, papal liturgy, *adventus*, reform, dedication of churches, Easter liturgy, Christmas liturgy

The twelfth century has long been considered a period of "renaissance" emerging from the papal reforms of the eleventh century.¹ Integral to this

¹ The historiography on this complex notion of renaissance is prohibitive; important works include: Charles H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927); Percy E. Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio: Studien und texte der Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedankens vom Ende der karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1929); Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Alqvist and Wiskell, 1960); Christopher N. Lawrence Brooke, *The Twelfth Century Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969); Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton,

understanding of renaissance is the revival of the genre of a *descriptio urbis* from antiquity.² Multiple descriptions of the city of Rome were created in the Latin West in the twelfth century and the most influential of these was the *Mirabilia urbis Romae*, the *Marvels of the City of Rome*. The *Mirabilia* concludes quite wistfully,

These and more temples and palaces of emperors, consuls, senators, and prefects were inside this Roman city in the time of the pagans, as we have read in old chronicles, have seen with our own eyes, and have heard the ancient men tell. In writing we have tried as well as we could to bring back to human memory how great was their beauty in gold, silver, brass, ivory and precious stones.³

So, the *Mirabilia*, ever since Charles Haskins famously first considered the twelfth century a period of renaissance, has itself served as a key example of the renewed interest in antiquity, its history and literary and artistic forms, that marks for us a “renaissance” period. In a slightly broader sense, scholars have considered the twelfth-century’s self-conscious efforts at renewal and reform, as also typifying a renaissance model.⁴ This emphasis on renewal and reform framed in terms of the classical and Constantinian

NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 198-202; Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable, and Carol D. Lanham, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Robert N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Giles Constable, ed., *Il secolo XII: la “renovatio” dell’Europa Christiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003); Dale Kinney, “Rome in the Twelfth Century: *Urbs fracta* and *renovatio*,” *Gesta* 45, no. 2 (2006): 199-220.

² Dale Kinney, “Fact and Fiction in the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*,” Éamonn Ócarragáin and Carol Neman de Vegvar, eds., *Roma Felix—Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 235-252, at 238. See also, Herbert Bloch, “The New Fascination with Ancient Rome,” in Benson and Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal*, 615-636; Robert Brentano, *Rome before Avignon, a social history of thirteenth-century Rome* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 75-91; Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 117-118.

³ Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zuchetti, *Codice Topografico della Città di Roma* 3 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1946), 65.

⁴ Constable has come to prefer “reformation” over “renaissance” because the former “is a less exclusively cultural and secular term than renaissance, as it is used today, and is thus a reminder that the movement of renewal included religious life and institutions as well as intellectual and artistic developments,” Constable, *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 3.

Roman past (expressed through a variety of literary and legal genres as well as artistic media) enables us to appropriately describe the period as a twelfth-century renaissance.⁵

The text was copied, expanded upon, and imitated throughout the century but this essay will consider primarily that text in its earliest form. The *Mirabilia* had been commonly accepted to have been written no later than 1143 by a canon of St. Peter's named Benedict.⁶ That attribution has recently been questioned because of inconsistencies between the *Mirabilia* and another important topographical text written by Benedict prior to 1143, the compilation of texts known as the *Liber Politicus*, in its descriptions of various portions of the city.⁷ That argument places the text around the millennium and has not, it seems, been widely accepted, although recent work has shown that the *Mirabilia* was dependent on earlier written sources.⁸ In fact both the *Politicus* and *Mirabilia* offer the reader multiple

⁵ The term "renaissance" as applied to the twelfth century has been a point of contention for nearly a century and I cannot summarize the historiography here. A recent critical voice is C. Stephen Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1151-1183. Jaeger critiques the use of the term based on twelfth-century pessimism about the age (as distinct from the humanists' enthusiasm for their own period of renewal). Many critics point to the vagueness of the application of the term; see, for example, the extended review by Bernard McGinn, "Renaissance, Humanism and the Interpretation of the Twelfth Century," *The Journal of Religion* 55 (1975): 444-455. At least in part, Benson and Constable turn away from Haskins' more vague language and point to the twelfth century "desire to restore or return to a lost or buried past," a past that was only partly classical, but also Constantinian and apostolic, and "its sense of renewal, reform and rebirth," as the essential features of this particular renaissance. This enthusiasm for the Roman past of the first four centuries shaped many of the most prominent endeavors of the twelfth century (in architecture, law, and religious reform). For a nuanced discussion that engages the ambivalence of the renewal of ancient political and architectural forms see, Kinney, "*Urbs fracta and renovatio*," especially at 213-217.

⁶ Louis Duchesne, "L'auteur des *Mirabilia*," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Ecole Française de Rome* 24 (1904): 479-489.

⁷ Cesare D'Onofrio, *Visitiamo Roma mille anni fa, La città dei Mirabilia* (Rome: Romana società editrice, 1988) 14-18, 25-26. The original attribution was by Duchesne, "L'Auteur des *Mirabilia*," 479-489. See the discussion by Dale Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 235-237. For the text of the *Liber Politicus* see volume 2 of Paul Fabre and Louis Duchesne, *Le Liber Censuum de l'Église romaine*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fontemoing et Cie, [puis] E. de Boccard, 1910-1952).

⁸ Nine Robijnte Miedema, *Die "Mirabilia Romae": Untersuchungen zu ihrer Überlieferung mit Edition der deutschen und niederländischen Texte* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1996), 4-11, thinks it unlikely that Benedict was the author. She is following Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *Die Zeremonienbücher der römischen Kurie im Mittelalter* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1973).

ways of organizing the city and neither text is overly scrupulous about making those multiple modes of presentation consistent. The two texts, however, have long been associated since they are bound within the same twelfth-century manuscript containing the earliest redactions of both: Cambrai, Bibliothèque Communale, Cod. 354 (512).⁹ Putting aside the question of authorship, that the *Politicus* and the *Mirabilia* were so closely associated at the outset of the manuscript tradition suggests that contemporaries considered them to be related and, therefore, must have seen them as somehow coherent. Furthermore, the *Politicus* contains a Roman *Ordo* that details papal liturgy in the city; an *Ordo* derived from the Roman *Ordo* of the *Politicus* is also bound with the *Mirabilia* in the later twelfth-century manuscript containing the *Liber Censuum*, the administrative records of the papal *camerarius* (Cod. Vaticano Latino 8486, compiled in 1192).¹⁰ Thus, the *Mirabilia* continued to be associated with the Roman *Ordo* in the later twelfth century. The Roman *Ordo* is itself another set of itineraries across the city, crisscrossing Rome as the pope proceeded from either St. Peter's or from the Lateran to the church appropriate to the feast. Since these were never simple or direct routes, Benedict's *Ordo* also provides a list of monuments in the City. With few exceptions, historians have tended to treat the *Ordo* as distinct from the *Mirabilia* even though, as we have noted, they had a shared manuscript tradition and a shared home among the canons of St. Peter's in the twelfth century. Dale Kinney has recently shown that the Christmas processional of Benedict's *Ordo* mirrors

Dale Kinney finds the argument against Benedict unpersuasive, "Mirabilia Urbis Romae," in Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin, eds., *The Classics in the Middle Ages: Papers of the twentieth annual conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1990), 207-221, at nt. 12. See the extended discussion in Maria Accame and Emy Dell'Oro, *I "Mirabilia Urbis Romae"* (Rome: Tored, 2004), 15-25. Benedict's authorship has been vigorously defended by John F. Romano, "The Ceremonies of the Roman Pontiff: Re-reading Benedicts Twelfth-Century Liturgical Script," *Viator* 41, no. 2 (2010): 133-149, at 147.

⁹ Valentini and Zuchetti, *Codice Topografico*, 11-13. Miedema, *Die "Mirabilia Romae"*, 4-11 agrees with Valentini and Zuchetti on its probable ur-text.

¹⁰ Valentini and Zuchetti, *Codice Topografico*, 15. For a direct comparison of the major litany in view of the topographical evidence in the *Mirabilia*, see Joseph Dyer, "Roman Processions of the Major Litany (*litaniae majores*) from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century," *Roma Felix*, 112-137. Kinney examines the relationship between the Christmas processional of the *Ordo* and the descriptions of the *Mirabilia* to argue in favor of Benedict's authorship (or at least, "surely an intimate colleague"); Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 245-252, at 252.

the itinerary of the eighth-century Einsiedeln itinerary, even though it does not share its toponyms. At the same time she argues convincingly that Benedict's *Ordo* and the *Mirabilia* are "intimately related" without organizing the material in the same fashion.¹¹ This suggests the possibility that the *Mirabilia* is best read through the lens of the papal ritual and ceremonial of the twelfth century (most notably Benedict's *Ordo*) and, in turn, that the meaning of the ritual life of the twelfth-century papacy can be better understood through the *Mirabilia*.

The *Mirabilia*'s descriptions of the city and its monuments are relatively brief and have been thought of as being organized in three sections.¹² The first section lists the essential infrastructure of the city, its walls, gates, triumphal arches, hills, palaces, and bridges, but also its cemeteries and places of martyrdom (sections 1-10 in the Valentini and Zucchetti edition). This first section is quite brief and is concerned primarily with listing rather than describing sights. The second section, by contrast, concerns many fewer sites in the City and is often described as "legendary," since it presents longer narratives associated with a given sight such as the vision of Octavian on the Ara Coeli or the naked philosophers Praxilites and Phidias (i.e., the Dioscori) (sections 11-19). Finally, the third section (20-32) is most often described as an itinerary (a "perambulation" in one editor's words) or a region-by-region guide to the City.¹³ Scholars have observed that the narrative moves, approximately, from the area of the Vatican across the Tiber towards the tomb of Octavius through the area of the Forum, and into Trastevere (we will return to this itinerary in detail in a moment). This third section is so concerned with ancient Roman (i.e., not Christian) temples, that it has been called "de templis" by modern scholars.¹⁴ The combination of legends of the city in the second section and the rough itinerary of the third section, proceeding, as it were, temple

¹¹ Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 245, 249-251.

¹² The text is typically presented in this manner, although the divisions are not part of the original manuscript. For example, Eileen Gardiner and Francis Morgan Nicholas, eds., *The Marvels of Rome: Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (New York, NY: Italica Press, 1986), xi, xxi-xxii, citing Henri Jordan *Topographie der Stadt Rom in Alterthum*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1871). I am largely following the Nichols' translation, correcting it against the Valentini text as needed.

¹³ Gardiner, 31; Valentini and Zuchetti, 3:10; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 238.

¹⁴ Fabre and Duchesne, *Liber Censuum*, 1:98, noted by Dale Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," at nt. 17.

by temple around the city, has caused scholars to frequently refer to the work as a “guidebook” to the city of Rome; a guidebook with clear ambitions to renew the glory of the ancient city.¹⁵

If we examine the third section of the *Mirabilia*, the section often referred to as a “guidebook” for pilgrims, and consider the sites described in sequence, we discover a route that begins in a coherent manner but becomes increasingly confused.¹⁶ The third section (to provide only an outline), at chapter XIX, begins at St. Peter’s (Map 1, 1) drawing the reader’s attention to Nero’s obelisk and the great pine cone before proceeding toward the so-called Sepulcher of Romulus and the Terebenth of Nero near Castel Sant’Angelo, which it describes as the Temple of Hadrian.¹⁷ The route proceeds across the Tiber and arrives at the Mausoleum of Octavian (Map 1, 4), also described here as an ancient temple with priests.

From there it continues to the Pantheon (Map 1, 5), likewise considered an ancient temple, and other ancient temples in the area are also described. Most notably an apt former inscription is recorded by the *Mirabilia*, “Old Rome was I, now new Rome shall be praised; I bear my head aloft from ruin raised.”¹⁸

The next destination is Capitoline and it is described as the former Capitol of the world and that here was the Temple of Jupiter and Moneta as noted by Ovid; other temples are also described and noted to be lost. The reader is then taken to the Fora and a number of temples in the area are also named, with the Mamertine Prison (the traditional site of the incarceration of Peter and Paul) serving as a landmark to orient the reader amidst the ruins of temples.¹⁹ The “Arch of the Seven Lamps,” that is the Arch marking Titus’ triumphal return to the City with the spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem, is likewise merely a landmark here to help orient your gaze towards a variety of present and absent temples, including one in front of the Colosseum.²⁰

¹⁵ Most notably Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, 198.

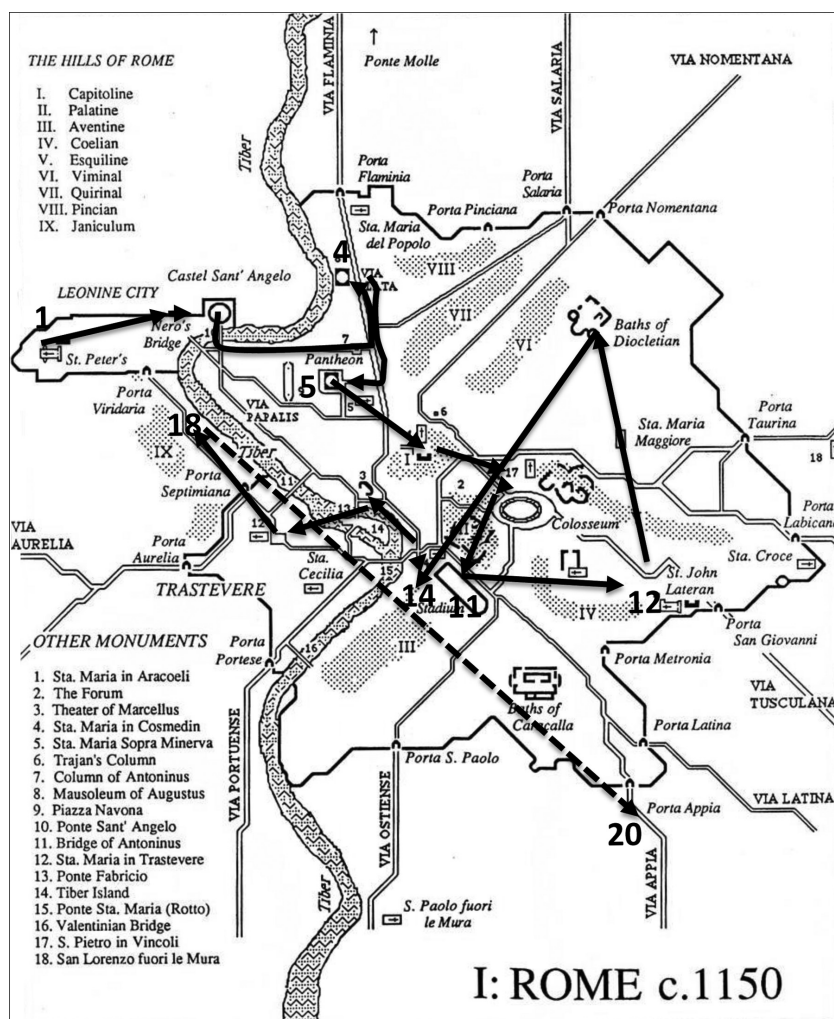
¹⁶ Valentini and Zuchetti, 3:10. All maps are based on those found in Gardiner and Nicholas, *Marvels of Rome* with the permission of Italica Press. A searchable map linked to a database that is part of an ongoing research project of mine, may be found at: http://users.drew.edu/lhamilto/cincproject/opening_page.html.

¹⁷ *Mirabilia*, XIX.

¹⁸ *Mirabilia*, XXII; Gardiner, 37.

¹⁹ *Mirabilia*, XXIII-XXIV.

²⁰ *Mirabilia*, XXV.



Map 1. *Mirabilia*, Section 3: "Pilgrim's Itinerary".

From here the matter gets more confused as we proceed over the Palatine to the Circus Maximus (Map 1, 11), where it is observed that Constantine took much of the Circus' decorative materials to create Constantinople. From there, we proceed up the Caelian hill toward the Lateran; while local pagan temples are described, the beauties of the Lateran itself (Map 1, 12) are noted but the author demurs that they are "not to be described." The confusion is compounded as the route moves from here to the Baths of Diocletian; this requires over a mile of backtracking to view what the *Mirabilia* describes as the ruins of the Palace of Diocletian with four temples. Worse still, from the vantage of an itinerary, is the decision to retrace one's steps entirely and proceed from the Baths of Diocletian to the Aventine (past the Circus Maximus) to visit the Temple of Mercury (Map 1, 14).²¹

From there, the itinerary returns to a largely linear format. It identifies the neighborhood of the *Schola Graeca* and points the reader to a variety of temples, some simply remembered as formerly in the area. Santa Maria in Cosmedin is not mentioned by the *Mirabilia*. Rather, and tellingly, the author seems primarily concerned that the reader to know that we are in the Greek neighborhood of Rome, surrounded by former pagan sites.

The route proceeds to and across the Tiber Island into Trastevere with multiple pagan temples observed along the route. The "Jew's Bridge" and Santa Maria in Trastevere serve as landmarks to help orient the reader. The latter, as is often the case in this section, is described as having displaced a pagan temple. The temples at the base of the Janiculum (Map 1, 18) take us close to our starting point at the Vatican, before the traveler is asked to return to Tiber Island and conclude the tour outside the City gate on Via Appia with the Temple of Mars and an unnamed triumphal arch (Map 1, 20).²²

There are three things about this third section worth noting at present. First, this is obviously a text with a keen interest in ancient, pre-Christian Rome, going so far as to list sights and inscriptions no longer present on the twelfth-century Roman landscape. Second, Christian and Jewish sites are named either to orient the reader or, in the case of churches, to point out that the church is on the site of a former temple. It is the renewed interest in the classical past of the city that makes this pointedly a "renaissance" text in the sense of the term discussed above. Third, while

²¹ *Mirabilia*, XXVI-XXVIII.

²² *Mirabilia*, XXIX-XXXI.

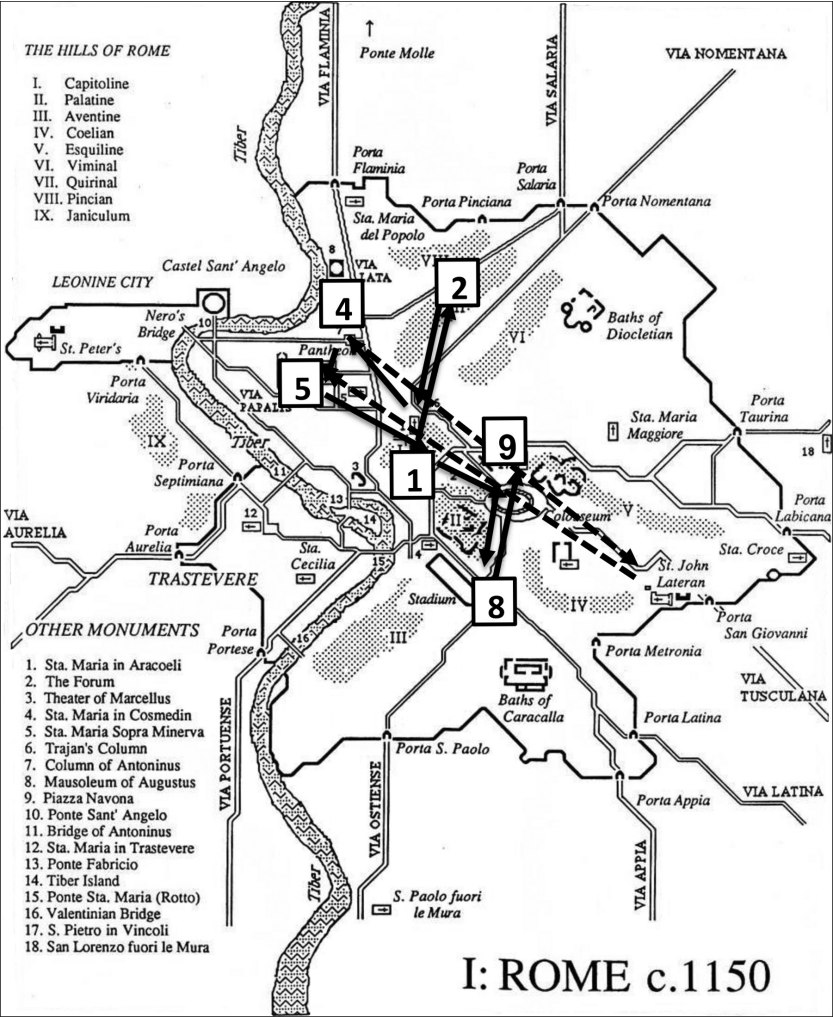
this section is a guide to the city's regions, it makes for very rough travel along a route not overly concerned with linearity. It meanders around the city, doubling back on itself on multiple occasions, listing the local pagan sights as it proceeds. For this reason, while the text provides an itinerary, it seems more an imagined than practiced itinerary. This combination of imagination and topography only heightens its power as a "renaissance" text.²³ That is to say, the *Mirabilia* is less concerned to describe the city as it was than "to reconstitute the vanishing ruins as a shapely city of memory."²⁴ It is a remembered city, a city of the imagination that interests the author and that enables him to recapture a version of its historic glory as well as restore lost monuments to the city landscape.

The second section of the *Mirabilia* embellishes that imagined landscape with a number of narratives of Rome's mythic past, all of which connect the pagan past to the Christian present. Historians have long appreciated that this section, given its interest in Roman imperial history, possesses a renaissance quality, and we will highlight that briefly. Less attention has been paid to the fact that one can follow these narratives as an itinerary at least as well as one can follow the itinerary of the third section. The first story in this section takes as its setting the Capitoline Hill (Map 2, 1). It relates the vision of the Emperor Octavian that leads to the foundation of Santa Maria in Aracoeli.²⁵ The story begins at the time when Octavian had "made the entire world render tribute to him." The senate wanted to worship him as a god but Octavian was unsure; he turned to the Tiburtine Sybil. She asked for three days to consider the question and returned prophesying a future King who would rule forever and judge the world. The *Mirabilia* only quotes a few lines, before directing the reader to read the entire prophecy in the sibylline books. While Octavian listens to the Sybil,

²³ See Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 238, for the debate over the practicality of the itinerary. That it is primarily a literary itinerary, does not preclude an intention to trace a route across the city.

²⁴ Kinney, "*Urbs fracta and renovatio*," 217.

²⁵ *Mirabilia*, XI. See Cynthia White, "The Vision of Augustus: Pilgrim's Guide or Papal Pulpit?," *Classica et Mediaevalia, Revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire* 55 (2004), 247-277. Giuseppe Gianelli, "La Leggenda dei 'Mirabilia' e la antica topografia dell'Arce Capitolina," *Studi Romani* 26 (1978), 60-71.



Map 2. *Mirabilia*, Section 2: Mythic Histories.

He saw in heaven a virgin, exceedingly fair, standing on an altar holding a man-child in her arms... and heard a voice from heaven saying, 'This is the altar of the Son of God.' The emperor straightaway fell to the ground and worshipped.²⁶

This spot, the bedchamber of Octavian, would become Santa Maria in Aracoeli for this reason. Thus, the narrative explains the meaning of the dedication of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. The story christens Octavian and provides multiple pagan witnesses to the coming of the Christ even as it explains the origins of Christian sacred space via the pagan past.

From the Capitoline the text moves to the Esquiline and the statues known today as the Dioscuri (Map 2, 2). The *Mirabilia* records the tradition that these were two philosophers who were immortalized in stone by the Emperor Tiberius. The horses "trample on the earth, that is, on the mighty princes of the world... And there shall come a very mighty king who shall mount the horses, that is, the might of the princes of this world." The two philosophers are naked, "as all worldly knowledge is naked and open to their minds." The *Mirabilia* also references a now lost sculpture of a woman, "the woman encompassed with serpents, who sits with a shell before her signifies the Church and the preachers who preach her; but whoever desires to go to her may not unless first washed in that shell." Thus, the Dioscuri are turned into a symbol of baptism, asceticism, and also of the ultimate coming of Jesus as king.

A list of Roman officials follows in the earliest redaction of the *Mirabilia*, as does a brief description of the Columns of Trajan (Map 2, 4) and Marcus Aurelius.²⁷ Here the text takes a significant detour in order to mention the height of the Colosseum and to offer a story concerning the equestrian statue in front of the Lateran (I have placed this in dotted lines on Map 2 as the story is in part negative; it erases a common meaning for the equestrian state). The *Mirabilia* explains that the equestrian statue is not of Constantine, as commonly thought. Moreover, it continues themes from the previous sections. In fact, the *Mirabilia* tells us the statue commemorates the defeat of "a mighty king from the East [who] came to Italy and besieged Rome on the side of the Lateran."²⁸ The defeat is approximately placed in the Republican period, "In the time of the consuls and the senators." What is more, the narrative is told with a humor that has

²⁶ *Mirabilia*, XI, 28.

²⁷ See the article in this issue by Stefano Riccioni.

²⁸ *Mirabilia*, XV, 32.

not been fully appreciated. As this eastern king besieged the city, he took up the habit of relieving himself nightly at a certain tree. The king's arrival at the tree is described by the word *adventus*—the term for an imperial entrance and procession through the city—and, indeed he is greeted ritually by a singing owl.²⁹ A young Roman tricked the king, by playing the role of the king's groom and bringing forage for his horse. Here the word used for fodder is *fasces*—the name used for the bundled rods and axe that was the sign of *imperium*.³⁰ When the bird announced the *adventus* of the king to relieve himself, the young man went out from the city with this *fasces* of feed. Instead of feeding the horse, however, the young man seized the king and carried him off to the city, shouting for the Romans to attack the king's army who were then routed. The entire story becomes a pun with these two subtle word choices. The king from the East who would conquer Rome is not greeted as emperor with an *adventus*, an imperial crowning and procession through the city, and not met with the sign of ruling authority, the *fasces*; instead he is seized while attempting to relieve himself at a tree.

The itinerary returns to focus on the Pantheon (Map 2, 5), and in the same time period as the previous story, “the age of senators and consuls.” The story begins with a bell ringing on the Capitoline, it is the bell hung around the neck of an idol representing Persia. The bell signals a rebellion in the Persian portion of the empire.³¹ The Prefect Agrippa was charged

²⁹ “[I]n cuius adventu cocovaia, quae in arbore sedebat, semper cantabat,” *Mirabilia*, XV, 33. The *Mirabilia* appears to be the origin of this story, see Maria Accame Lanzillotta, *Contributi sui Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (Genoa, 1996), 97-103.

³⁰ “Ille vero exivit urbem et fecit herbam, quam in fascem religatam portabat ante se more scuterii,” *Mirabilia*, XV, 33.

³¹ The Romans were, of course, engaged in nearly constant warfare with successive Persian imperial dynasties from the Republican period (69 BCE) until 629 CE. The extensive warfare between the two empires was one of the preconditions to the rapid advance of the Arab caliphs and the final overthrow of the Sassanid dynasty in 651 CE. The Persian Empire directly ruled portions of the eastern Mediterranean at various points throughout its history through the seventh century. More to the point, the narrative of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius I victory over the Persian Sassanid “King of kings” Chosroes II and restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem in 630 was both important and wide spread in the Latin West especially with the advent of the crusades. It was remembered in the Roman liturgical calendar from the seventh century. In the minds of medieval authors, the great enemy of the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, was often equated with the Saracens. For a brief overview of the iconography of the True Cross to the twelfth century, Heraclius' role in it, and its significance for crusading ideals, see Barbara Baert, “New Observations on the

with suppressing the rebellion and a vision of the mother of the gods assured him that he would be victorious and in turn should dedicate a temple (the Pantheon) to herself, Cybele, and Neptune, god of the sea.³² So it was, but in the Christian era the Pantheon plagued the Romans with demons, until Pope Boniface requested that the emperor give it to him. “[So that as] it was dedicated to Cybele, the mother of the gods, on the kalends of November, it might be rededicated to Mary and all saints on the same day.”³³ The pope was then to sing the Mass there on the feast of its dedication and the Roman people, as at Christmas, were to receive the Eucharist in both body and blood. Not only does this narrative offer an explanation of a liturgical event, a dedication, it provides liturgical instruction (a date for a papal Mass and the form of distribution of the Eucharist).

The bell on the Persian idol rings again on the Capitol during a narrative intended to provide the framework for a sermon on the feasts of the martyrdoms of Abdon, Sennen, Sixtus (pope) and Laurence (deacon), the next narrative (Map 2, 5). In the *Mirabilia* Decius defeats the Persian rebellion under a Christian emperor, but returns to Rome and murders the emperor. Decius (249-251 CE) then turns on the Christians, killing them at the Colosseum and at the *Septizonium* (Map 2, 8; in the eleventh and twelfth centuries this was an important papal fortification).³⁴ The context, it should be noted, is again liturgical since the framework is a sermon for the important feast of Roman clerical martyrs, 6 August.³⁵

Genesis of Gerona (1050-1100). The Iconography of the Legend of the True Cross,” *Gesta* 38, 2 (1999): 115-127, at 124. Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden, Brill, 2004), 4, 144, 152, 160-173. Christopher Twyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), for the significance of Heraclius at 379.

³² While the Pantheon still bears Marcus Agrippa's name, the current (and medieval) monument was built by the Emperor Hadrian to replace one built by Agrippa, Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, 12. The events in question may be Agrippa's return of the Roman standards from the Parthians to Octavian in 19 BCE. If that were the case, it would make an interesting parallel with the return of the True Cross. The *Mirabilia* may be relying on either Josephus or Livy for the career of Agrippa. See, Charles B. Rose, “The Parthians in Augustan Rome,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 19, 1 (2005): 21-75, at 37-38.

³³ *Mirabilia* XVI, 34-35.

³⁴ Glen W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 127.

³⁵ *Mirabilia*, XVII, 36-39.

Finally, the author turns the reader's attention to St. Peter's in Chains (Map 2, 9) and we are presented with another liturgical context. The description of the site intertwines the most pronounced themes of this section. The narrative begins with Mark Antony taking as his wife, Cleopatra, "the queen of Egypt, wealthy in gold and silver, precious stones and people."³⁶ The two assembled a fleet and began to advance on Rome; hearing this, Octavian challenged them near the heel of Italy. Having defeated them, "Octavian took away vast sums of money from that victory and triumphed over Alexandria and Egypt and all the country of the East and so came back to Rome victorious."³⁷ The kalends of August was then established as a day of celebration commemorating the triumph of Octavian. Later, the Empress Eudoxia, the mother of Theodosius, acquired in Jerusalem, "from a certain Jew," the chains Herod used to bind Peter and she thought to bring them to Rome. Arriving on the first of August, the feast of Octavian, she pleaded with the pope to allow her to build a church in honor of Peter and the heavenly emperor to be dedicated on the kalends of August.³⁸ The church of St. Peter in Chains was dedicated on the kalends of August.

This story is telling because it reveals the meaning of a dedication, not only as the triumph of Christian Rome over pagan Rome, but Rome's displacement of Jerusalem and Roman conquest of "all the country of the East." Thus, the feast of the dedication of St. Peter's in Chains contained this triple memory, Roman triumph over the East, Roman displacement of Jerusalem (recorded also in the Arch of Titus), and Christianity's triumph over paganism. This triumph over paganism is linked repeatedly in this text to the defeat of Persia and unnamed people of the East. Thus, we hear also echoes of the Christian conflict with Islam, as Muslims were, indeed, regularly described as pagans by Latin Christians in the

³⁶ *Mirabilia*, XVIII, 40.

³⁷ *Mirabilia*, XVIII, 40.

³⁸ Interestingly enough, the *Mirabilia* observes that "the proposal was heard by the people and received with little favor, but was at length granted according to the prayer of the pope and queen." For a brief treatment of the *Mirabilia* that considers this incident as an example of the work's combination of sacred and ancient history, see Maurizio Campanelli, "Monuments and Histories: Ideas and Images of Antiquity in Some Descriptions of Rome," in Claudia Bolgia, Rosamond McKitterick, and John Osborne, eds., *Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas, c. 500-1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35-51, at 37.

twelfth century.³⁹ In this way, the *Mirabilia* becomes not only a renaissance text, but a text that seeks to renew Roman dominance over the Mediterranean by reviving its memory on the streets of Rome.

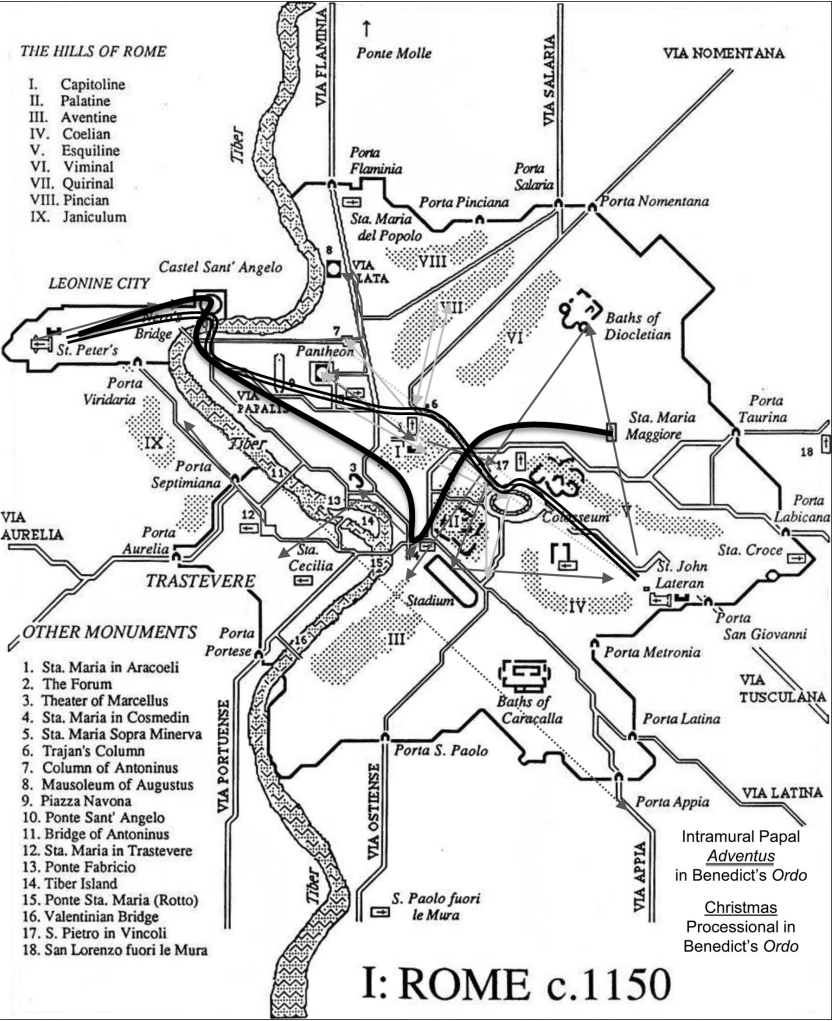
These themes of Christian triumph over the pagan, and the Roman triumph over the Persians and other usurpers from the East are integrated in this second section with a variety of liturgical elements: most notably the dedication of churches, but also baptism, the sanctoral cycle (including a sermon reference), the liturgical calendar, an occasion for the laity to receive under both species, a directive for the papal Mass at the Pantheon, and the *adventus*, all described in a rather coherent walk around the sacred core of the ancient city. That this narrative, filled with suggestions of liturgical meaning, especially for Roman sacred space, is itself a kind of itinerary gives it a sense of being processional. This sense is brought into sharp relief when one considers the text in light of the *Ordo* of Benedict with which the *Mirabilia* is bound. The *Ordo* is itself a series of liturgical itineraries in and around the sacred heart of the City on the major feast days in the calendar. The *Ordo* takes the reader on multiple liturgical itineraries throughout the City, organized according to the liturgical calendar.

An examination of two significant liturgical processions in the *Ordo* suggests a relationship between its description of the city and that of the *Mirabilia*. First, a comparison of sites noted for the papal *adventus* (Map 3), the processional triumph of the Roman pontiff through the ancient sacred heart of the city held on Easter Monday, and those in the *Mirabilia* suggests that the latter might be better understood as a liturgical commentary than a *descriptio urbis*.⁴⁰ In the first instance we can see that the *Mirabilia*'s imagined itineraries, although not without order, are much less rational than the practiced itineraries of the *Ordo*, even though these latter papal itineraries are themselves rather meandering.

Second, putting aside shared natural topography, of the twenty-five pagan sites named in the *Ordo*, twenty-one are also named in the *Mirabilia* (Map 3) and many that are unnamed in the *Ordo* are encountered

³⁹ John V. Tolan, "Muslims as Pagan Idolators in Chronicles of the First Crusade," in David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto, eds., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 97–117.

⁴⁰ Susan Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial at Rome in the Twelfth Century* (London: Boydell Press, 2002), 188–89.



Map 3

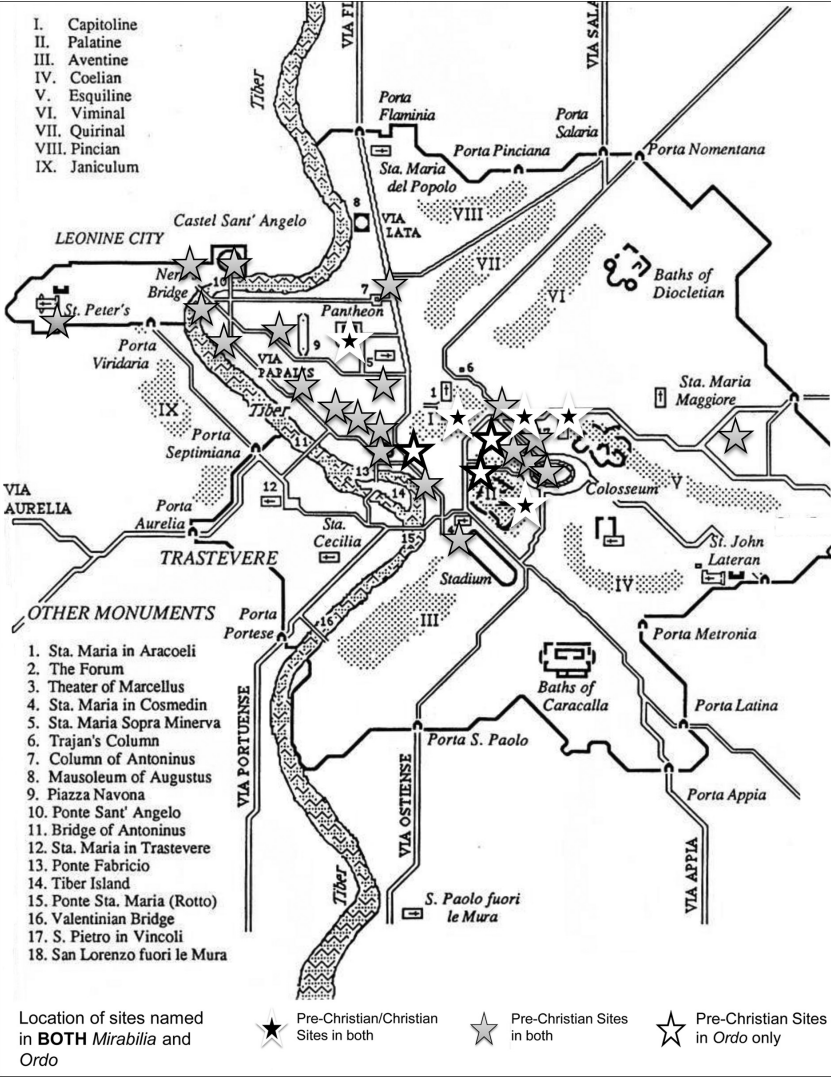
in its liturgical processions.⁴¹ In fact only four pre-Christian sites named in the *Ordo* are without explanation in the *Mirabilia* (albeit one of these is the *Via Sacra* which the *Mirabilia* certainly traces if it does not name it).⁴² The *Ordo* and the *Mirabilia* should be thought of as having been written or received as a series of itineraries through the City, organizing and giving meaning to its public space, each itinerary informing the other. Indeed the distance between the two genres is further collapsed when we realize that, in one instance, the remains of the Basilica of Maxentius, the *Ordo* relates a version of the narrative found the *Mirabilia* (that the site had been the haunt of demons before the time of Pope Sergius).⁴³

Thus, the papal itineraries at Easter and, to take a second example, at Christmas (Map 4) are provided a context through the *Mirabilia*. That context, in turn, suggests a meaning for these rites. That meaning is clearly one of a Roman and Christian triumph over the pagan past. More broadly, the *Mirabilia* places that triumph into a Mediterranean context, by pointing to the defeat of Persian emperors and, more generally, eastern forces. Finally, it connects those Roman and Christian triumphs to the ultimate triumph of the second coming of Christ. Combined with the *Ordo*, the *Mirabilia* provided a narrative for the liturgy of the city of Rome. The liturgy and the *Mirabilia* fostered a myth for the clergy of St. Peter's, and by

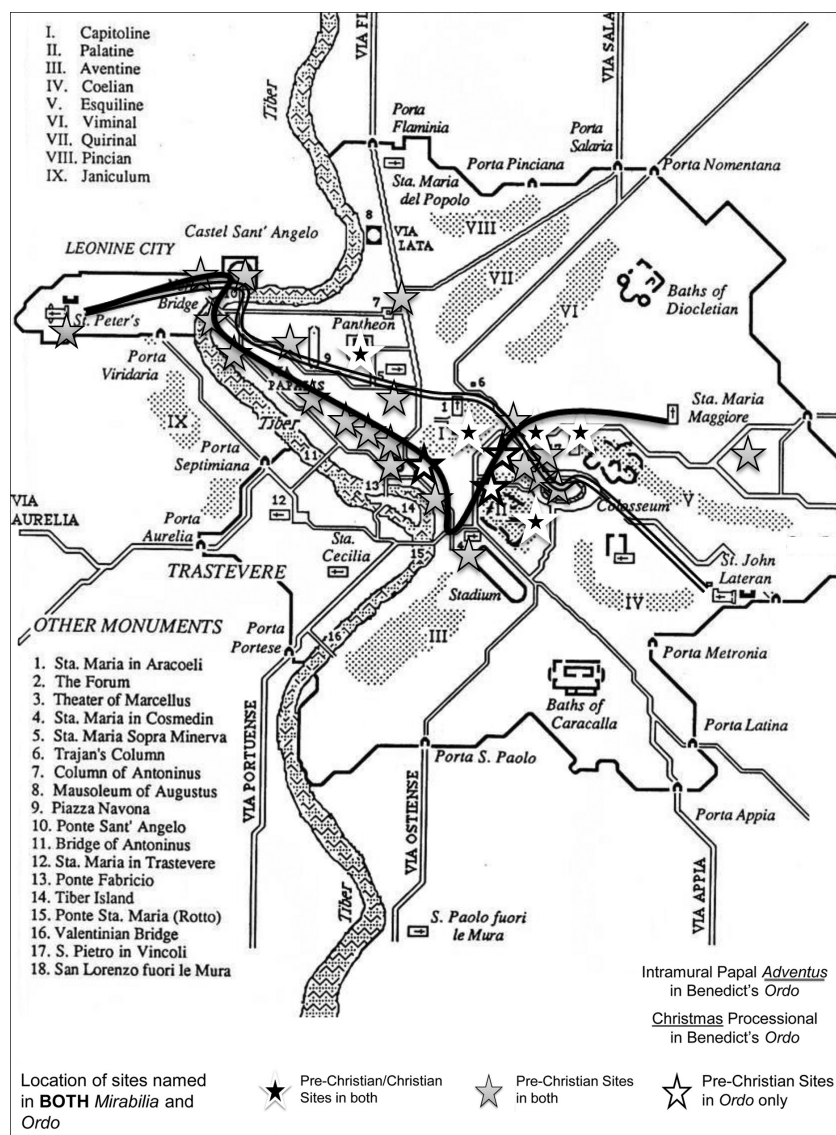
⁴¹ "Templum Marii quod vocatur Cymbrum:" *Politicus*, 153 and *Mirabilia*, XXVII; "Arcum Pietatis," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, III; XXII; "Pontem Adrianum," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, II; "Templum et castellum Adriani," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, VII, XX; "Obeliscum Neronis," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XIX; "Sepulchrum Romuli," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XX; "Sub arcu triumphali Theodosii, Valentiniani et Gratiani" *Politicus*, 155, 156 and *Mirabilia*, III; "Palatium Chromatii," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, VI, XXII; "Inter circudi Alexandri et theatrum Pompeii," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, VII; "Per Pineam," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XIX; "Arcu Manus carnea per clivum Argentarium," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia* III; "Arcu triumphali inter templum fatale et templum Concordie," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia* III, XXIV; "Forum Tajani et forum Caesaris," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XXIV; "Arcum Nerve... templum eiusdem dee," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XXIV; "Templum Jani," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, XXIII, XXIV; "Templum Romuli," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, VI, XXIV; "Arcu Titi et Vespasiani qui vocatur Septem lucernarum," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, III, XXIV-V; "triumphalem arcum Constantini," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, III; "Coloseum," *Politicus*, 155 and *Mirabilia*, VI, VIII, XVII, XVIII, XXV; "Maria Rotundam," *Politicus*, 157 and *Mirabilia*, VI, VII, XVI, XXII; "Arcum Latone," *Politicus*, 159 and *Mirabilia*, XXIV.

⁴² "Sub arcu ubi dicitur Macellum Laviani [Macellum liviae]," *Politicus*, 153; "Viam sacram" and the "Porticum Agrippinam," *Politicus*, 155; and the "Domum Orphei," *Politicus*, 159.

⁴³ "Arcum Latone," *Politicus*, 159 and *Mirabilia*, XXIV.



Map 4



Map 5

extension the populace, of the triumph of Christianity through the emperors, of the Roman empire, at its outset under Augustus, whom it secretly “baptizes,” and through the Christian emperors, as fundamentally Christian and Roman.

Chrysogonus Waddell concluded, “The Reform of the Liturgy from a Renaissance Perspective,” skeptically, suggesting that the liturgy of the twelfth century did not experience a renaissance, *per se*:

Given the fact that the Christian liturgy is directly rooted in the Christian Mystery, and that the perspective is not ‘man as man,’ but ‘man as called to perfect communion with God,’ we should not expect to find much of a renaissance perspective informing the liturgy.⁴⁴

Waddell did, however, observe that themes of renewal and rebirth were inherent in the liturgy, at moment such as baptism or at Christmas sermons.⁴⁵ In a period of renaissance the *Mirabilia* not only employed those liturgical themes, especially as they related to the liturgy for the dedication of churches, but placed them firmly into a renaissance context. It fostered a layer of meaning within the topography of Rome that could transform the meaning of Roman liturgical practice.⁴⁶ With the dedication’s baptismal imagery and its strong sense of a space transformed, combined with the use of pagan sites and the spolia of antiquity, the dedication loaned itself to this inherent theme of renewal.⁴⁷ The *Mirabilia* made those themes explicit within the City. Moreover, it recast Roman history as Christian sacred history and, as the liturgical calendar would recount the sacred past moving towards its eschatological conclusion, so too, its setting within the City became a reminder of the true history of the marvels of

⁴⁴ Chrysogonus Waddell, “The Reform of the Liturgy from a Renaissance Perspective,” in *Renaissance and Renewal*, 88-109, at 108.

⁴⁵ Waddell, 90-91.

⁴⁶ This is an approach similar to that of Herbert Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300: on the Path of the Pilgrim* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), stated at 7, but throughout.

⁴⁷ On the Carolingian interpretation of the dedication rite in terms of a baptism, see Brian V. Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998); on the role of the dedication rite in the Gregorian reforms, see Louis I. Hamilton, *A Sacred City: Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

Rome: they bespoke the triumph of Christ and Christianity. It created a liturgical experience of rebirth and renewal so that the reader might move from pagan to Christian meaning within a specific space, as well as across the City.

More pointedly, it also cast the reader, and the liturgical experience, into a broader Mediterranean-wide perspective. It encountered Greek Christians, the Jews of Rome, and Persians throughout the city and emphasized their subordinate status to papal Rome. The *Mirabilia* recounts two stories of Persian rebellions being defeated, it recounts Octavian's conquest of Egypt and "all of the East," and it invents a story of a "mighty King from the East," tricked and repulsed at the walls of the City. It incorporated this defeat of the Persians into the liturgy by attaching one story to the dedication of St. Peter's in Chains. That dedication replaced the feast of Octavius who, in the *Mirabilia*, becomes not only the first emperor, but the first Christian emperor. That same emperor is noted by the *Mirabilia* to have defeated Egypt, Jerusalem and the East. The defeat of another Persian rebellion is recalled in a narrative set, liturgically, within one week of the feast of the dedication of St. Peter in Chains (the feast of Octavius) at the martyrdom of Sts. Laurence and Sixtus. Thus, these martyrdoms become, surprisingly, a simultaneous celebration of the expansion of the Roman Empire. The punning *adventus* of an invented eastern conqueror inverts the papal *adventus*, turns it into a scatological joke, and literally overthrows a would-be King of Rome. The liturgy of *adventus*, repeated at Easter, also marked the subordination of the Jews via the rite of the presentation of the Torah and the *laudes* in Hebrew.⁴⁸ These *laudes* were also in Greek and Latin and the Greek *laudes* were marked in the *Mirabilia* when it noted the community of the Greek *schola*. Papal liturgy placed the city at the head of the Mediterranean world, through the ritual *laudes* of the Jewish community during the *Adventus* and through its use of Greek hymns at Christmas even as it moved through the Greek community of Rome.⁴⁹

The *Mirabilia* created a context for papal liturgy. As the reader moved across the liturgical year and, by means of the pontifical processions, across

⁴⁸ Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial*, 197-202. See also the article in this volume by Marie Thérèse Champagne and Ra'anan Boustán.

⁴⁹ Zoï Patala, "Les Chants Grecs du *Liber Polticus* de chanoine Benoît," *Byzantion* 66 (1996), 512-530.

the City, he was reminded, not of a faded Roman glory in crumbling temples, but of an ongoing history that had been foretold even by the pagans themselves, that Christian Rome would triumph in the end. The *Mirabilia* both revealed and promoted not only an historical and renewed Roman significance for papal liturgy, but a broader Mediterranean significance with Rome at its center.

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